



## VI. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

National Park Service planning guidelines for State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans require an implementation program that identifies the State's proposed actions for the obligation of its Land and Water Conservation Fund (L&WCF) apportionment.

The actions presented in this chapter are intended to address many of the issues and concerns raised in the five areas of statewide importance that were the subject of focus group discussions involving members of the general public and state agency staff representatives. The results of these meetings are summarized in Chapter IV. The majority of actions and strategies proposed through the focus group process do not lend themselves to implementation with assistance from the LWCF. The first section of this chapter, however, discusses actions that are eligible for and should be assisted with the LWCF.

### ***A. Priorities for Land and Water Conservation Fund Expenditures***

#### **1. Funding for Acquisition**

Acquisition of land and easements in Maine for public recreation, open space, and access to public waters has benefited in recent years from state, federal, and private funding to an unprecedented degree. This activity and the broad base of interest in the availability of land for public recreation and conservation is fueled by significant changes in ownership, development, the actual and potential loss of permission for traditional public use of private land, and a growing appreciation for the availability of a wide spectrum of diverse outdoor recreational opportunities. This is indeed a large part of Maine's heritage and mystique, and has led to vigorous acquisition-related activity not only by government, but also in many instances by local and statewide land trusts and environmental groups. Maintaining and increasing partnerships between state

agencies and private groups is more clearly than ever before both desirable and needed to effectively respond to the need for additional land acquisition.

The Land For Maine's Future Fund, (LMF) a state bond issue acquisition funding support program, which is administered by a board appointed by the Governor, approved by the legislature, and supported by State Planning Office and natural resource agency staff, has played a major role in focusing and sustaining acquisition activity. The program's funds, however, are likely to be exhausted by the end of 2003. The LMF program assists in the acquisition of fee and easement interests on significant lands by matching bond funds with other funds from federal, state, municipal, and private sources. The Department of Conservation's Bureau of Parks and Lands, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Atlantic Salmon Commission, and the Department of Agriculture have acquired land with the assistance of the LMF program, as have several municipalities and non-governmental organizations.

Current priorities for the Land for Maine's Future Program are driven by legislation and the recommendations of the 1997 report of the Land Acquisitions Priorities Advisory Commission (LAPAC). This group, established by then-Governor Angus King, conducted an extensive, statewide public outreach campaign to solicit comment and input on land conservation and recreation needs. The Commission's recommendations cover a wide range of land conservation issues throughout the state. With current funding close to depletion, the LMF program is reassessing its project scoring system through a second outreach effort currently underway. This outreach consists of five public meetings held through out Maine complemented by a series of meetings with recreational and landowner interest groups. In addition to this effort, LMF anticipates contracting for an independent assessment of its program over the past five years to measure progress towards the LAPAC goals and recommendations.

It is anticipated that the Maine Legislature will consider and authorize new funding in 2004. Passage of such bonding, which is hoped for in the fall of 2004, would provide at least five more years of funds to match federal and private acquisition funding sources. Because of the legislative interest in and oversight of the LMF program, projects accepted for funding assistance from LMF as determined by the program's criteria should be considered the state's priorities for acquisition and use of Land and Water Conservation Fund monies, at both the state and municipal levels.

The acquisition policy criteria of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (Appendix IV) have been integrated into the LMF framework. Following the conclusion of the LMF scoring system assessment, the bureau's criteria may be adjusted to respond to current needs and opportunities.

## **2. The ATV Issue**

An issue of overwhelming statewide concern that was raised in several groups was the impact of the tremendous growth in ATV use in Maine. Illegal or inappropriate use of All Terrain Vehicles is resulting in user conflicts and social problems on certain trails, causing environmental damage, leading to the closure of private lands to public recreational use, and can impede the acquisition of certain high-priority open space and recreational lands by government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. In response to the rapidly increasing public and agency concerns related to misuse of ATVs, the Governor established by Executive Order the Maine Task Force on All-terrain Vehicle Operation to consider ATV use in Maine and report back to him in December 2003 with recommendations. (Appendix V). Many of the agencies and groups represented on this task force also attended one or more of the focus group meetings. The task force is now holding public meetings on over 50 recommendations in the areas of Enforcement, Trails and Environment, and Safety and Education. After incorporating public input, a final proposal will be forward to the Governor and the Legislature in December 2003. Actions recommended by this task force that call for additional acquisition or development of trail resources for ATVs, or statewide ATV trail planning, will be a high priority for LWCF support.

## **3. Maintenance of Facilities**

Maine's State Park system includes 35 state parks, 22 historic sites, numerous undeveloped and unstaffed properties, the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, the Penobscot River Corridor, the St. Croix River Corridor, and miles of abandoned railroad rights-of way now serving as public, multiple-use trails. All told the park system comprises 107,703 acres and represents a public investment in infrastructure estimated at 80 million dollars.

Recent support for state land acquisition programs indicates a significant level of support for increasing public recreational opportunities. Maine's special quality of life has always been linked with public access to open spaces, scenic views, remote forests and lakes, and undeveloped shore land. The state park system plays an essential role in this tradition, providing public access and protecting outstanding examples of Maine's natural and cultural heritage, now and for generations to come.

The state parks and historic sites have not always received the attention they require to protect the resource and provide a safe, enjoyable experience for every visitor. In many cases an aging infrastructure, including extensive water systems, leach fields and septic systems; miles of roads, parking lots, trails, and buildings, is not getting any younger, is subject to greater use than ever before and now needs attention. Recent budget balancing has led to a reduction in funds available to the bureau to carry out needed capital repairs at many facilities. Coupled with the fact that dedicated repair and capital improvement funds from "Loon Plate" license registration are steadily declining, this means

less funding is available to maintain park and historic sites. Lack of adequate repair funds in the past has resulted in the deferral of repairs and capital improvements that now have grown to a backlog that may cost as much as 16 million dollars to fully address. If this trend continues, sections of some state parks and historic sites may become unsafe, their access limited, public investment compromised, and the quality of the experience severely diminished.

Responsible investments should be made in Maine's park system now to protect public health and safety, protect the resource and public investment, and ensure full, continued public access. Bonds, appropriated funds, grants, and other sources of private funding or fund raising should be vigorously pursued to help address the need to maintain a healthy infrastructure. Eligible state park enhancement, renovation, or restoration projects will be a priority for L&WCF matching assistance

Improvements to dispersed recreational facilities on the state's Public Reserved and Nonreserved Public Lands will also make use of LWCF. These lands total 564,000 acres, including fee and easement holdings, mostly in 29 large properties (management units) and 130 smaller properties (scattered lots). An intensive management planning effort is underway to update expired management plans and develop new plans for recently acquired units. It is anticipated that these plans will call for development of large numbers of remote and semi remote recreation facilities such as hiking trails, campsites and boat launches. Needs for extensive reconstruction of existing facilities will likely be identified through this planning process, as well.

#### **4. Statewide Planning**

To maintain eligibility for L&WCF and meet new legislative reporting requirements, the State must continue to gather information and produce a SCORP at five-year intervals. Especially relevant in this undertaking will be the regular updating of the Bureau of Parks and Lands' PARKALL database, gathering comprehensive and current data on recreation trends specific to Maine, and the digitized state maps showing the location and extent of federal, state, local, and non-profit lands available for public recreation. This is no small task, since it requires the participation of many individuals and organizations, but it is important to assess the changes over time in the supply and mix of opportunities and their relation to population concentrations, transportation corridors, and significant natural and cultural features. With the hiatus in stateside LWCF funding between 1996 and 2000, many ongoing information gathering efforts relevant to comprehensive recreation planning were replaced with attention directed to more immediate assignments such as Allagash Wilderness Waterway management planning, and land acquisition. This has significantly hampered the preparation of the present SCORP.

Other studies that deserve LWCF assistance include an updated assessment of the economic impact of state parks, historic sites, and public reserved lands on local and state economies. Numbers available in this area are outdated. Current information would be used to support arguments for additional funding and supplement the data available on the extent of the impact of tourism on the state's economy.

In addition, a system-type plan for lands managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands is long overdue, and should be eligible for LWCF assistance. The merger of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation and the Bureau of Public Lands in 1995, the ongoing acquisition of conservation and recreation lands to be overseen by the bureau, and the increasing pressure on these lands to serve multiple and sometimes conflicting interests, require a comprehensive look at Bureau areas and facilities to determine how, as a system, these can meet resource management, resource protection, and public recreation objectives.

A statewide trail plan has been a recommended agenda item since 1993, but never carried out. Trails of all types, at all levels, are an increasingly important component of the state's recreational portfolio, in great part due to the availability of the federal Recreational Trail Fund (formerly Symms Fund). Other factors contributing to the increased interest in trail activity include the ageing of the population, health benefits of non-motorized activities, and the growth in mountain bicycling, snowmobiling, and ATV use. The Bureau of Parks and Lands sponsored an extremely well attended trails conference in the fall of 2002. The response from the trail community and agencies was so positive that another conference will be held in 2004. A statewide trail plan would inventory trails, document interest and needs, evaluate multiuse trails that combine motorized and nonmotorized activities, and provide priorities and strategies for the future.

The Governor has recently announced a new program, The Maine Rivers Restoration Initiative that will be coordinated under the leadership of the State Planning Office. The program is an effort to address all aspects of river planning, not the least of which is a public access and recreational opportunity component. It is not clear at this early point whether LWCF funds will assist this statewide planning effort; however recommended protective shore land acquisition and development of camping opportunities would certainly be considered as high priority for assistance from LWCF.

Other LWCF-supported statewide plans, surveys, and studies related to the five statewide issues or to recommended actions that were the subjects of the focus group component may also be undertaken, if determined necessary to shape and implement state policy.

## 5. Wilderness Recreation Opportunities

There are two federally designated wilderness areas in Maine - the 12,000 acre Caribou-Speckled Mountain Wilderness in the White Mountain National Forest and a 7,000 acre portion of the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge. The state manages for “wilderness” values (i.e., generally inaccessible by motorized vehicle, primitive camp sites, no multiple use resource management, and varying degrees of low-intensity, dispersed recreation) at Baxter State Park (206,000 acres) and the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (23,000 acres). Within the state’s public reserved land system some “wilderness” attributes are protected through designation of areas as ecological reserves (77,000 acres) or “backcountry no-cut” areas (13,000 acres), which exclude timber harvesting.

Discussions about the availability of opportunities for non-motorized recreation and “wilderness” in Maine are ongoing. This issue was raised during the 2003 SCORP Focus Group meetings, and during preparation of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway Management Plan (1999) and the Bureau of Parks and Lands’ Integrated Resource Policy (2000), which governs resource management on state parks and public reserved lands. Along the spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities available in Maine, from developed portions of parks and off-road vehicle trails to areas with limited or no motorized vehicle access and foot paths, opportunities for the latter are particularly appropriate for the State to pursue for areas with high ecological values and limited existing development.

At a time when landscape-scale conservation land acquisitions are occurring at a record pace by both public agencies and private nonprofit conservation organizations, it is timely to look at “wilderness-type” recreational opportunities that may be available on these lands, as well as on exiting public lands with similar characteristics and values. Acquisition of areas to be managed for low intensity, non-motorized, dispersed recreation in a natural setting, or as roadless “wilderness,” should include efforts to secure sustainable long term management funds for such areas.

## 6. Community Recreation and Smart Growth

Since the resumption of a stateside LWCF in 2000, the Bureau of Parks and Lands has earmarked 50% of the Maine apportionment to state projects and 50% to municipal projects. It is understood by municipal interests that some extraordinary situation might arise in the next five years that could cause the bureau, with prior discussions with municipal interests, to propose adjusting that division of an annual apportionment to be able to meet an extremely high priority project-of-opportunity for state action that would otherwise be missed, or in the event inadequate municipal funding appeared available to match municipal projects rising to a level of 50% of the apportionment. As a general matter, however, the equal division of Maine’s apportionment between state and municipal projects will continue to be the state’s policy.

Current municipal outdoor recreation concerns, as expressed in the focus group dedicated to that issue (Chapter IV), rated maintenance of existing facilities above the development of new facilities; stressed safe access routes to facilities; increased linkage between neighboring communities; comprehensive planning, state funding assistance, and especially in cases where sprawl was ripe to occur, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation near population centers.

The Bureau of Parks and Lands rates municipal project proposals, with the assistance of an advisory committee with municipal representation, according to an Open Project Selection Process (Appendix VI) that has been revised recently to reflect the desirability of smart growth planning and policies and the priority of restoration of existing projects over new projects.

## ***B. Selected Focus Group Strategies***

Strategies selected by Bureau of Parks and Lands staff from those proposed by focus group participants—consolidated, with duplication and listing of actions already being undertaken in existing programs eliminated—are listed below. These are provided for consideration by state agencies and others as they develop their individual programs.

Two subjects appeared explicitly and implicitly in a number of Focus Group strategy discussions, and are worth special note:

- 1) coordination among state agencies to ensure compatibility of efforts and to bring multiple financial, technical, management, and other resources to projects of common interest.; and
- 2) allocation of resources, especially financial resources, between the acquisition of new lands and the management of existing lands, including the development and maintenance of public access and facilities and the monitoring and management of public use.

State agency coordination occurs more frequently than may be recognized. Examples include: the Natural Resources subcommittee of the Maine Tourism Commission, composed of natural resource agency and tourism representatives, who are leading a statewide discussion on balancing natural resource protection and use; and coordination in identifying and meeting water access needs by the departments of Marine Resources, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Conservation, Transportation, and the State Planning Office. There is also considerable coordination among state and federal agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations in the acquisition and management of important conservation and recreation lands. These agency and public/private partnerships have become the norm, rather than the exception. Expanding state

agency coordination and partnerships will be a key strategy to achieving to conservation and recreation objectives.

As noted elsewhere, the financial and human resources for management of existing public conservation and recreation lands continue to be insufficient to meet the needs for planning, improvement, and maintenance and for managing public use. Additionally, funding for management of newly acquired lands is not now available, except for funds for limited access improvements on lands acquired with Land for Maine's Future funds and a few voluntary stewardship accounts. Understandably, people want to see sound management of existing lands and facilities before new responsibilities are acquired. People also want access to newly acquired lands for recreation and capable management of them. Maintenance and management of both existing and newly acquired lands and facilities is a high priority.

At the same time, Maine faces an historic opportunity to acquire important conservation and recreation lands: property with these resources is becoming available at an unprecedented pace; public support for acquisition is strong, as evidenced by the funding available through federal and state programs; and private conservation organizations are pursuing the similar acquisition goals and making their resources available for public-private partnerships that make truly significant acquisitions possible. Seizing, or failing to seize, this opportunity will have a significant impact on the future of conservation and outdoor recreation in Maine, and acquisition of these lands must also be a high priority.

## **1. Statewide Issue: Availability of Outdoor Recreation Resources**

- explore additional incentives for private landowners to keep their lands open to public use, e.g., ways to reduce the liability/cost of damage caused by public recreational use; more responsiveness to landowner complaints by enforcement agencies, user groups, local and statewide organizations;
- seek a new Land For Maine's Future bond issue to provide matching acquisition assistance;
- address the illegal and irresponsible use of all terrain vehicles that is causing environmental damage and threatening continued use of private land;
- intensify the search for lands that can be purchased to provide boating and coastal access, especially in the southern coastal area;
- increase the use of volunteers in state parks and historic sites to address maintenance needs;
- strengthen state agency coordination and cooperation;
- develop management plans for state land facilities with more input and participation from user groups and non-profits;
- increase opportunities for "backcountry", non-motorized recreation;
- Increase the availability of information on recreational opportunities, generally and by specific activity.

## **2. Statewide Issue: Community Outdoor Recreation and Smart Growth**

- find a stable, predictable source of funding for the currently unfunded Municipal Recreation Fund to assist municipalities in meeting local recreational needs;
- document the value, tangible and intangible of municipal recreation programs and facilities so communities can make informed decisions about priorities and municipal support can be increased for local initiatives;
- communities should make adequate maintenance of existing facilities a higher priority than development of new facilities;
- communities should express strong support for stateside L&WCF and municipal grants component;
- consider Increasing MOHF and LMF funding for municipal initiatives;
- require provision of non-motorized links to other parts of the community in permitting development;
- publicize models (case histories) of effective implementation of “smart growth” initiatives;
- encourage state agencies to become more involved in regional comprehensive planning, and require local planning to consider regional, multi-community coordination and cooperation;
- integrate Beginning With Habitat (BWH) into local planning and conserve BWH-identified high-value areas that cross town boundaries;
- consider a statewide transfer of development rights (TDR) initiative;
- encourage locating locally-owned open space and recreational facilities adjacent to high-activity areas such as malls to encourage use and limit expansion of dense development;
- establish connecting corridors between public facilities;
- provide safe routes, or public transportation, to and between public facilities, e.g. bike paths/ways, sidewalks, trails;
- ensure that local recreational facilities appeal to entire spectrum of users and uses;
- increase planning for recreation in local comprehensive planning ensuring that facilities/programs will meet needs and be sustained.

## **3. Statewide Issue: Recreation and Public Access in the Northern Forest**

- create additional incentives for private landowners to continue to allow traditional public use of their lands, e.g., funding to assist landowner mitigate the costs associated with public use;
- continue to expand landowner relations program(s) to improve communications and cooperation with private groups and agencies;
- continue/increase the use of easements to protect areas of high public value from development and ensure public access, while allowing timber harvesting;

- focus protection on areas of significant public value subject to threat, e.g., from sale of “kingdom” lots, shore land or mountain slope development, important wildlife habitat, development that would lead to introduction of uses incompatible with traditional uses;
- continue funding acquisition with bond issues, partnerships with non-profits, individuals, user groups, federal (Forest Legacy, L&WCF);
- consider management costs of land/easements to be acquired and ensure that management can be met with existing resources, partnerships, or identified new sources of funding, e.g., stewardship endowments;
- consider a variety of mechanisms to fund management;
- increase acreage of state-protected “wilderness:” backcountry, non-motorized recreational opportunities;
- increase acreage of state lands designated as “ecological reserves”;
- establish trail links between “gateway” communities and undeveloped forest areas.

#### **4. Statewide Issue: Trail Recreation**

- consider establishing a trails coordinator/division in the BPL/DOC who would address many of the needs identified for more and better information, maps, guides, etc.; provide technical assistance for local efforts, training and workshops; help coordinate enforcement and inter agency trail-related activities; equivalent of Off Road Vehicle program;
- balance the availability of single and multiple-use trails (motorized and non-motorized);
- repeat Trails Conference periodically;
- address ATV issue: increase enforcement; create special areas and more trails; encourage club formation; respond to landowner concerns; promote responsible user ethic; increase fees to provide more funds;
- consider tax on outdoor (trail-use-related) equipment (hiking) to create dedicated trail funding;
- make local officials and organizations more aware of Recreational Trail Fund program;
- train and increase use of volunteers;
- encourage/require including trails in local comprehensive planning;
- publicize trails in tourism promotion;
- develop partnership with Healthy Maine;
- don't overlook equestrian trail use;
- consider additional private landowner incentives;
- foster user ethic that recognizes use of private land is a privilege, not a right;

#### **5. Statewide Issue: Tourism and Public Recreation Areas and Facilities**

- identify and diminish promotion of public recreational activities that are a cause of concern to private landowners whose lands support the activities;

- identify visitor behavior that threatens to lead to loss of access on private land;
- encourage that rules for use of municipal recreation lands be subject to local discussion before adoption;
- do not market activities or lands that cannot withstand the extent of projected use;
- convene an annual meeting of agencies, Tourism Commission, and representative landowners to assess progress in addressing landowner concerns;
- include more input from private sector—landowners, businesses—in planning and marketing decisions;
- increase agency coordination and information sharing in overlapping issues;
- develop and distribute information specific to landowner concerns;
- market areas of the state and activities that are underutilized;
- find ways that resource managers and tourism promoters can improve communication;
- work to increase public support for the benefits of recreational tourism, whose economic contribution helps support resource agency programs;
- continue the work of the Tourism Commission's Committee on Natural Resources, which brings together commission members and resource agency staff to discuss programs and concerns;
- survey tourists' recreational activities, participation rates, and trends.

### **C. *Additional Actions***

These actions were not raised in the focus group process, but are presented in order to provide a list of recommendations from which policy makers may choose those that are most appropriate and feasible.

- Integrate relevant SCORP recommendations into the Bureau's unit management planning process;
- maintain ongoing dialogue and coordination with North Maine Woods, Inc. regarding public access to and recreational use of the NMW management area, particularly in light of changing forest ownership;
- identify agency land holdings that could be further utilized to serve the saltwater, freshwater or trail/picnic day park deficiencies of the urban areas in which they are located;
- identify developed parks and historic sites that are frequently used to capacity or overused or are located in regions where improvements/expansion would help meet identified regional needs or reduce overuse by increasing capacity;
- identify and seek funding from the legislature and other sources for the development of facilities on park and other public lands located in regions where improvements would increase public use;

- continue use of the Maine Conservation Corps and similar programs to improve and repair trails on state lands and support program involvement on private lands available to the public;
- continue to develop boat access sites in conformance with the DOC/DIF&W Strategic Plan for Providing Access to Maine Waters for Boating and Fishing, updated in 2000, and the SPO/DMR 2001 Coastal Water Access Priority Areas;
- identify wildlife habitat and continue to acquire title and/or easements to land with important wildlife values that are threatened with conversion to incompatible uses;
- continue to acquire and develop boat access sites statewide, especially in regions with recognized needs, as identified through use studies of existing access sites and/or surveys of users;
- acquire river access sites to the thread of the river or stream;
- continue to target and pursue acquisition of saltwater and freshwater sand beaches to ensure public ownership of those resources to meet identified statewide and regional deficiencies;
- meet Wetland Acquisition Criteria
- continue development of management plans for habitat and ecosystems on public lands;
- annually collect public use data from public and private outdoor recreation areas to monitor use trends;
- periodically update outdoor recreation participation data, including in-depth data (greater than once-a-year participation) for activities of current interest;
- identify potentially threatened quality areas adjacent to parks and historic sites and methods to protect them;
- support sufficient funding for the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to identify and map wildlife habitats according to the Natural Resources Protection Act;
- conduct an analysis of the marine sports fishery to identify resource management/user concerns and develop options to provide programs that address the concerns;
- survey fishermen to determine the demand for walk-in fishing access sites;
- give higher priority to municipal L&WCF grant requests that will create additional parking to meet identified high priority urban area deficiencies;
- promote local use of Maine Conservation Corps services to develop or improve outdoor recreation facilities;
- work with the State Planning Office and the Maine Recreation and Park Association to determine the effect of demand for community recreation facilities on school locations (in the context of Smart Growth);
- provide incentives for multi-town facilities by making multi-town development and/or management a priority for L&WCF grants;
- seek state funding for the Municipal Recreation Fund with the assistance of the Maine Recreation and Park Association.